Surveys suggest an erosion of trust in government, among individuals, and between groups. Although these trends are often thought to be bad for democracy, the relationship between democracy and trust is paradoxical. Trust can develop where interests converge, but in politics interest conflict. Democracy builds on a recognition that politics does not provide a natural terrain for robust trust relations, and so includes a healthy distrust of the interests of others, especially the powerful. Democratic systems institutionalize distrust by providing many opportunities for citizens to oversee those empowered with the public trust. At the same time, trust is a generic social building block of collective action, and for this reason alone democracy cannot do without trust. At a minimum, democratic institutions depend on a trust among citizens sufficient for representation, resistance, and alternative forms of governance. Bringing together social science and political theory, this book provides a valuable exploration of these central issues.

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Democracy and Trust

Edited by

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